



What works? What fails?

FINDINGS FROM THE NAVRONGO COMMUNITY HEALTH AND FAMILY PLANNING PROJECT



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Navrongo Health Research Centre

OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE

WW: Would you say the Navrongo Health Research Centre (NHRC) has had any impact on health in your paramourty? If yes, could you explain by giving examples?

Chief: The work of the NHRC and its nurses has helped us here in the Nakong community a lot. For instance most of our children were always attacked by malaria but now, malaria has been drastically reduced and many more children now survive attacks. Measles has become a thing of the past. Women can also now deliver without complications because they get prenatal services from the nurse during their pregnancy.

WW: Did anyone from the NHRC come to talk to you about the Community Health and Family Planning Project (CHFP)? Can you describe the first such occasion when someone from the NHRC came to talk to you about the CHFP?

Chief: Yes I remember but I cannot state the exact date. It is about 10 years or more. People from the NHRC came to discuss health issues with us. I and my elders and sub-chiefs received them well because it was a piece of welcome news. The people from the NHRC said they intended to place a nurse in our community so that we report our health problems to her for immediate attention.

WW: What were your immediate impressions?

Chief: When someone comes from outside with an idea, you don't reject it. With regard to the NHRC, we knew straight away that the work would be highly beneficial to us. We received them warmly and embraced their ideas. Nakong is an isolated community. It is also infested with the black fly and no one wants to come here. Even our own children run away. So we received them with open arms and prayed that the work would succeed.

WW: Our nurses do complain that some members of the communities do not make efforts to help them in their work. They also complain some mothers even refuse to present their babies and children for check ups. Do you encounter any such occurrences?

Chief: Things of that sort do not occur in my community. On the contrary there have been occasions when nursing mothers and pregnant women will wait at an agreed time for the services of the nurse but she fails to turn up.

WW: Your sub-district has had a Health Centre since 1972. Did you really need a CHO in your paramourty?

Chief: Asunia, where the hospital is sited, is very far from Nakong. It is a journey of about 9 miles thus it is not easy for the sick to get there for treatment. There are no cars here to ease our transportation problems. There are times when one will wait from morning to evening without getting a car to Asunia. But with the nurse here, we need not go that far for treatment.



The Nakong Chief as he views the CHFP's impressive results

WW: What in particular has the nurse done that touches your heart?

Chief: The time and attention she gives to our children's health is what I *cherish most about her*. First when we were without a nurse, when our children fell sick during the night we became afraid that they are going to die because of the long journey between here and the nearest health centre in Chiana. Thanks to NHRC we now have a nurse who is doing a good job particularly for our children. But somehow I think that you have not been fair to us with the nurse. You see that Nakong is very far away. Why did you put the nurse in Katiu? After all, isn't Katiu closer to Chiana than we are? So I think this is an issue that you need to take up and place a nurse here for us.

WW: A study has indicated that the ancestors are not averse to family planning. As a traditional ruler, what can you say about this conclusion?

Chief: I think the ancestors are right and I strongly support their view. Family planning is now very crucial because more and more of our children are surviving and we can now know that when you have fewer children they can all survive. When we give birth to fewer children, you can take very good care of them. But in a poor and isolated community like Nakong, infant and maternal mortality are still of great concern.

WW: Are there any aspects of health that you think have not been addressed under the CHFP? If yes, what do you think should be added to the programme?

Chief: Yes, indeed. We know that family planning and reproductive health are important but for us here it is the black fly that is our biggest problem. Why don't you do something about it? The black fly has decimated our population. Many of the young men get blind before their fortieth birthday. As a result many of our children migrate mostly to the southern part of the country. You see that since you arrived you have been slapping your arms. If you were not wearing a pair of socks you would have been hitting your legs too. I am very old and it is a miracle that I can see you even as we talk. Most men my age have long since gone blind. That is our plight and we think this should be of paramount importance to you too. In the night the mosquitoes take over. You gave us mosquito nets a long time ago that you wanted to test to see if they would prevent mosquito bites in order to reduce malaria. The nets have since got torn and we have not received new ones. We hear you have the nets for sale but they are not available here. If you give the nets to the nurse I am sure that many of our people will buy them.

WW: What can you and your community do to support the NHRC in delivering health services to your people?

Chief: The thing we can do is to cooperate with you by facilitating your research work. We would encourage our people to embrace your workers and provide them with any information they seek whenever they come around. It is our hope that this way, your work would be less burdensome. We would, above all, patronize the services that are offered at our doorsteps. We shall make the nurse so busy that she would ask for another nurse to assist her. If you ever send us a nurse of our own we promise to glean from our meagre resources to provide her with decent accommodation.



Send questions or comments to: What works? What fails?

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